

The New Testament makes the uncontested point that God's paramount concern is not with buildings or programs but with the moral and spiritual character of those who lead and care for His people. Godly leadership makes the true, spiritual difference in the local church. In fact, almost all the instruction on deacons in the New Testament relates to their qualifications.

According to the New Testament, not just anyone who wants to be a deacon can be one. Paul is emphatic about this, probably because this is where the church at Ephesus had gone wrong. Unqualified people had pushed their way into leadership positions. Indeed, placing unqualified and unfit people into the church's leadership structure is a crucial part of Satan's ongoing strategy for corrupting churches. Thus one of the major teachings of 1 Timothy is that a properly ordered church must have morally and spiritually qualified overseers and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

On this issue there can be no compromise without long term, ruinous consequences to the local church.

Alexander Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon*, p. 84

Deacons currently serving in MICC are:
Erik Bolme, Lorraine Buglione, Ewan Donnachie,
David Hepler, and Ralph Schönemann.

TERM OF SERVICE

In MICC, the term of service is two years. A deacon may be reelected to serve indefinitely so long as he continues to be qualified to serve and recognized by the body.

DISQUALIFICATION

Every member is subject to accountability within the church and therefore the deacon may be disciplined according to Biblical principles (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:14,15). A deacon, as an appointed representative of the church, is subject to scrutiny in areas which call for church discipline (unrepentant sin) and circumstances which might affect his continuing qualification to serve as a deacon.

ACCOUNTABILITY

In carrying out his duties, the deacon operates under the spiritual leadership of the elders and functions in unity with the other deacons. He is continually responsible to his brothers and sisters in the congregation, and ultimately accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ for the faithful discharge of his duties.

SPECIAL NOTES

In MICC, since the tasks performed by deacons do not regularly involve the exercise of spiritual oversight in the body, the office of deacon is open to *both* men and women. The activities of teaching and exercising authority over men mentioned by Paul in 1 Timothy 2:12 are the tasks that fundamentally distinguish the activities of an elder from those of a deacon. Both offices are to be filled by those who will serve the church; yet because of God's order and design for eldership and spiritual oversight revealed in Scripture, we believe the office of elder is restricted to men.

Please note: In this leaflet we employ a generic masculine pronoun to refer to both men and women who are qualified to serve as deacons. This is accepted English usage and is stylistically preferable and smoother to read than the cumbersome substitutes of "he/she" and "him/her".

MUNICH INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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DEACONS: SERVING IN MICC

GLORIFYING CHRIST
MEETING PEOPLE'S NEEDS
MINISTERING WITH MERCY



DESCRIPTION OF A DEACON

The New Testament teaches us that Jesus Christ is the head and Lord over all things pertaining to His church (Col. 1:18-20). It is under Christ's leadership that the New Testament establishes the offices of both elders and deacons within the local church. (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). Following the example of their Lord, the elders are to be *servant leaders* and deacons are to be *leading servants* of Christ's church (Mark 9:35, 10:43)

The elders are charged with the spiritual care and oversight of the local church while the deacons are given responsibility for the practical physical needs of the congregation. These two offices of elder and deacon represent Christ's loving provision for structure and order within His gifted body, the church.

The deacons are those men and women recognized by the congregation as desiring to serve and meeting the scriptural qualifications. Imperfect, yet saved by God's grace, they are to be spiritually mature persons whose conduct and reputation reflect godly virtue.

BACKGROUND

Our English word deacon was taken directly from the original Greek word *diakonos* which means "servant." The deacons are those who freely offer their love-prompted service to the church of Jesus Christ.

In Acts 6:1-7, seven men from the Jerusalem church were appointed by the apostles to ensure the equitable treatment of the widows in the church. Rather than be distracted from the service of the Word and prayer, the apostles delegated the task to these men.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR DEACONS

Proven character is not simply a matter of a clean past, but consistent and proven character and testimony in the present. While a deacon candidate may not always have been worthy of respect, sincere in his speech, or a one woman man, it is required that such character be both *currently* evident and *sufficiently* proven over time.

The time necessary to become proven in godly character is largely dependent on the circumstances and nature of his previous shortcomings. We are clearly charged to exercise caution—"They must first be tested" (1 Tim. 3:10). However we must not become legalistic or judgmental in our approach to evaluating a deacon candidate's past sins, character and usefulness to the Lord (Acts 26:9-18; 2 Cor. 5:16-18; 1 Tim. 1:12-17; Titus 3:5-8).

In 1 Timothy 3, Paul lists the qualifications for those who aspire to serve as elders and deacons. These qualifications summarize for each office the need for mature, humble, godly, servant leaders. The deacon must be qualified personally, spiritually, and domestically.

PERSONALLY QUALIFIED

Deacons, likewise, are to be...

"dignified"—exemplary spiritual and moral character.

"not double-tongued"—integrity and truthfulness of speech.

"not addicted to much wine"—not addicted to alcohol. A life marked by drunkenness is not a life of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

"and not greedy for dishonest gain"—service is not motivated by financial profit. The deacon must not use the office for personal gain, or be controlled by the desire for material wealth.

SPIRITUALLY QUALIFIED

"They must hold the mystery of the faith"—this refers to the body of Christian doctrine which we believe and live out.

"with a clear conscience"—daily life is consistent with Biblical knowledge. The deacon seeks to live by the truths of Scripture.

DOMESTICALLY QUALIFIED

"Their wives likewise must be dignified"—exemplary spiritual character.

"not slanderers"—does not slander others. An uncontrolled tongue, given to speaking critically or harshly of others is damaging to the life of the church family.

"sober minded"—balanced in judgment and self-control. Not given to wild extremes.

"faithful in all things"—worthy of confidence in all endeavors.

"the husband of one wife"—a 'one woman' man, faithful in marriage. Whether single or married, male or female, the character quality described here is one of sexual and emotional purity and faithfulness. In MICC, divorced and remarried persons will be considered carefully and prayerfully on an individual basis.

"managing their children and their own households well"—a faithful father and spiritual leader at home.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The deacons are charged with leadership for the practical physical needs in MICC. Their duties include the actual work of service and the oversight of others serving the church. Employing the biblical ideal of the deacon as servant, the deacons are to be mature examples of humble servant leadership in the church.

The work of the deacons is done as representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of the entire church family. Their work also serves the elders who might otherwise be distracted from their primary responsibility of the teaching and spiritual care of the church.

In MICC, the deacons perform, among others, the following basic duties:

- day-to-day financial matters pertaining to the efficient administration of the church.
- ensure that the church buildings are prepared for the Sunday school and service on Sundays, and left in a tidy and orderly state and locked following each service.
- count and record the weekly offerings in the worship service.
- ensure that assistance is provided as necessary for those organizing social and teaching events.
- assist with preparation and execution of major events such as annual retreats.
- direct the care for widows, orphans and poor in our church and community as our ministers of mercy.
- manage benevolence needs.
- assist in the Annual General Meeting of the church, as well as any other called meetings through the year.
- in order to accomplish these tasks, the deacons are authorized to recruit, train and utilize help from within the body of MICC on either a regular or an as needed basis.

PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES

ACCORDING TO HIS GIFTS

Each individual deacon is particularly gifted by the Spirit for the benefit to the body of Christ (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:12-31). Each deacon serves in accordance with his gifts and availability.

AS PART OF A BALANCED CHRISTIAN LIFE

The deacon is to be both a 'doer' and an 'equipper'; leading by example and by precept. Active and regular participation in the life of the church family is necessary to fulfill his duties.

ELECTION OF DEACONS

The process of election of deacons at MICC is as follows:

NOMINATION

Each December and January, nominations open for deacons. Any church member may, after prayerful consideration of the scriptural qualifications, ask the elders to consider one or more men or women (must also be church members) for the office of deacon.

CONSIDERATION

The nominee is notified of the duties of deacons in MICC and qualifications for deacons in the Scripture. Each person so identified is given serious consideration by the elders.

If the elders are not aware of any scriptural reason to decline the nominee, they proceed through a prayer and interview process with the nominee to decide together whether he is a true candidate for the office of deacon.

Any areas of life in which the nominee is found lacking are discussed lovingly, candidly and confidentially among the elders and nominee. His continuation in the process is determined by the elders and nominee following this discussion.

ANNOUNCEMENT AND VOTING

After the elders are assured of God's direction, of unity, and that any known objections have been dealt with properly, they publicly present the deacon candidates to the congregation.

They further charge the church family to be praying specifically for these candidates and their families.

The church family is given the responsibility to pray and express themselves regarding the candidate. During this period the elders challenge the body to affirm the man or to bring to them any report which may affect his qualification for the office of deacon.

Any objections concerning the candidate which might surface during this process are worked through in a constructive manner with the candidate involved so that any deficiencies or misunderstandings may be addressed and corrected.

Again, after the elders are re-assured of God's direction, and that any additional objections have been dealt with properly, they publicly present the deacon as a candidate to the congregation for voting. This voting takes place by written ballot at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), and 70% of the votes cast are required for election as a deacon.